

Bush: Stay the Course; DeFazio: The Country is Going in the Wrong Direction

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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today responded to the president's State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress. Following are DeFazio's remarks:

"Regrettably, the President offered a 'stay the course' speech at a time when a majority of Americans rightfully believe that the status quo is unacceptable and our country is heading in the wrong direction. The President's 'stay the course' policies mean that tax laws and budget priorities will continue to favor a handful of wealthy individuals while average families struggle to get by; the budget and trade deficits will continue to set new records, threatening our economic and national security; our troops will remain with no realistic strategy for bringing them home; and access to and the cost of health care will remain out of reach of tens of millions of families.

Economy: "Although the economy is growing and the stock market is up, the benefits have yet to trickle down to working families. For these families, wages are falling, health care, education and energy costs are rising, large scale layoffs are increasingly common-place, employers are slashing health care benefits and pensions, and failed trade policies are leading to the export of millions of good jobs. We must reprioritize the budget, target tax cuts to working families and advance fair trade policies to keep high wage jobs at home and put Americans back to work."

Federal Budget/Deficits: "While the President talked a good game, he failed to offer a serious proposal to get the federal budget under control. By endorsing trillions of dollars in additional tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit those making more than \$300,000 a year, the President forfeited the little remaining credibility he may have had on fiscal responsibility and deficit reduction. I agree there are areas of the federal budget that can be cut. But, we could eliminate the entire discretionary portion of the federal budget outside of the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security, and the federal budget would still be in deficit! To solve the budget crisis, we need discipline on both spending and taxation. The President continues to be in denial."

Health Care: "Over 45 million Americans and more than 600,000 Oregonians have no health insurance. After five years of doing nothing, it's about time the president recognized this

health care crisis. Unfortunately, his proposals will do little to help the uninsured or make health care more affordable. To provide effective health care coverage for all Americans we must stop subsidizing and coddling the industries at the heart of the problem, the insurance and pharmaceutical industries.

"What's most telling is that his words tonight won't match his deeds tomorrow. Tonight the president called for making health care affordable for everyone, but tomorrow, in order to provide more tax cuts for his wealthy contributors, he will encourage members of Congress to pass a budget reconciliation bill that raises costs and cuts off access to millions of people who get their health care from Medicaid and Medicare.

Energy: "After pushing an energy bill for more than four years that showered billions of dollars in subsidies on the oil, gas and coal industries, I am pleased the president is finally interested in discussing investment in renewable energy. I hope that he will put half as much energy into this effort as he did on his special interest energy bill approved last year.

Iraq: "The U.S. has won in Iraq. Saddam Hussein is on trial. There is no threat from weapons of mass destruction. And the Iraqi people have adopted a constitution and elected a new government. It is time to turn over control of the country to the Iraqi government, Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi people to build their future. It is time for our troops to come home."

Terrorism: "I agree that the U.S. should use all tools at our disposal to battle al-Qaeda. I supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan to go after al-Qaeda and I opposed the Iraq war because it pulled military and intelligence assets away from the fight against al-Qaeda. I fully support monitoring al-Qaeda members and associates. But, as even key conservatives have noted, there is no reason that such surveillance cannot be done in a way that is consistent with federal law and the Constitution. The president is not above the law."